

One cannot pass by altogether without mention the story of Zosimus that the reason of Fausta's implacable hatred of Crispus was not ambition for her own children, but a still more ungovernable and much less pardonable passion. Zosimus declares that Fausta was enamoured of her step-son, who rejected her overtures, and so fell a victim, like another Hippolytus, to the vengeance of this Roman Phaedra. Most modern historians have rejected the story, as emanating from the lively imagination of a Greek at a loss for a plausible explanation of a mysterious crime, and we may, with tolerable certainty, acquit Fausta of so disgraceful a passion. If, as we suppose, she was the untiring enemy of Crispus, it is at once more charitable and more probable to suppose that the motive of her hate was her fierce ambition for her own sons. For the moment the Empress conquered. But her triumph did not last long. Eutropius tells us that soon afterwards —mox—a vague word equally applicable to a period of days, weeks, or even months—Fausta herself was put to death by Constantine. What was her offence? Philostorgius\* declares that she was discovered in an intrigue with a groom of the stables—an amour worthy of Messalina herself. But the story stands suspect, especially when taken in conjunction with the legend of her passion for Crispus. The one seems invented to bolster up the other and add to its verisimilitude. The truth is that nothing is known for certain; and the whole episode was probably kept as a profound palace